

Coma victim's tragic story began with a car wreck

Pregnancy brings back friends' memories of a promising life

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Her boyfriend's injuries were numerous and painful — broken arm, broken leg, broken collarbone, shattered kneecap.

But he healed. The young Monroe County woman wasn't so lucky. She was pulled unconscious from the wreckage of her car on a rural road near Ithaca.

"They hoped she would be awake within a few days or a week. I certainly was hoping that," the man recalled recently. "But time stretched on and nothing happened."

Ten years later, another tragedy has been added to the sad saga. The woman, now 29 and still in a coma, was raped at a Brighton nursing home and is nearly six months pregnant. Her family has decided to allow her to carry the baby to term. Sources have said a family member wants to raise the child.

Only a half-dozen cases are

Laws, mysteries

Recoveries: A woman awakes from a coma after giving birth; another becomes responsive after an abortion is performed. **3A**

Legalities: The baby's custody is a tangled issue. **3A**

known in which a comatose woman gave birth. Experts say they know of no other case in which a woman already in a coma became pregnant.

Unaware of what's going on around her, the young woman has become a cause celebre worldwide.

She personifies debates over abortion, rape, privacy and decision-making for the incapacitated, and has focused attention on patient safety and nursing-home care.

In the month since the rape was reported to authorities, the woman's family has remained in seclusion.

Police have made no arrest

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